

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEVILL 00109 01 OF 02 161909Z
ACTION CA-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SCS-06 /020 W
-----049370 161950Z /70

P 161630Z FEB 78
FM AMCONSUL SEVILLE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2667
INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMCONSUL BARCELONA

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 SEVILLE 109/1

FROM PRINCIPAL OFFICER TO CA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC, SP
SUBJ: COMPLAINTS BY ELDERLY AMERICANS AGAINST NATIONAL
COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS

1. IN COURSE OF VISIT TO CONSULAR AGENT'S OFFICE IN MALAGA PROVINCE ON MONDAY FEBRUARY 13, 1978, I MET WITH HOSTESS OF AMERICAN CLUB OF COSTA DEL SOL AND SIX SENIOR US. CITIZENS WHO EXPRESSED RATHER EXTREME DISMAY AND UNHAPPINESS WITH TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS AND FACILITIES PROVIDED BY NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS THROUGH ITS TRAVEL ORGANIZATION LOCATED IN CHERRY HILL, NEW JERSEY CALLED SENIOR CITIZENS'S COUNCIL FUN IN THE SUN. AMERICAN CLUB HOSTESS WAS ATTEMPTING TO DO WHAT SHE COULD TO ALLEVIATE SITUATION AND ATTEND TO NUMBER OF NEEDS OF THESE ELDERLY AMERICANS WHICH THEY HAD EXPECTED TO BE TAKEN CARE OF THROUGH PACKAGE TOUR PROVIDED BY COUNCIL.

2. AMONG COMPLAINTS WERE:

A. THEY HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THROUGH BROCHURES AND OTHER PUBLICITY THAT THERE WOULD BE FULL TIME HOSTESS AVAILABLE TO THEM. NO SUCH HOSTESS WAS PROVIDED AS HAD BEEN IN PREVIOUS YEARS. HOSTESS IS INDISPENSIBLE PART OF THEIR NEEDS, SINCE MEMBERS WISH
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TO ATTEND CHURCH, OBTAIN MEDICAL AND DENTAL OR OTHER EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AND NO ONE WAS AVAILABLE TO HELP. THEY WERE LEFT COMPLETELY ON THEIR OWN.

B. ONLY PERSON AVAILABLE WAS SPANIARD NAMED ANGELO RAMIS CONNECTED WITH IBEROTOURS IN TORREMOLINOS WHO CHECKED IN EVERY TWO DAYS OR SO TO TAKE ORDERS FOR TOUR GUIDES TO SURROUNDING SIGHTS. RAMIS

INFORMS US THAT ALL ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE IN U.S. AND HE KNOWS NOTHING OF WHAT TRAVELERS WERE TOLD IN ADVANCE THAT WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO THEM IN THE WAY OF SERVICES.

C. THEY WOULD HAVE ORGANIZED ENTERTAINMENT WHICH THEY HAVE NOT HAD.

D. THEY WOULD BE SENT DIRECTLY BY AIR TO MALAGA. MANY HAVE HAD LONG LAYOVERS IN LONDON AS WELL AS CHANGES IN MADRID, INVOLVING TAKING CARE OF THEIR OWN LUGGAGE THIS HAS RESULTED IN BURDENSOME HARDSHIP FOR MANY WHO ARE NOT PHYSICALLY UP TO LONG WAITS IN AIRPORT TERMINALS AS WELL AS DEALING WITH BAGGAGE.

E. THEY WERE BOOKED INTO ALOHA PLAYA HOTEL WHICH HAS NO RESTAURANT FACILITIES. SOME APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO OTHER HOTEL WHICH SIMPLY WAS CLOSED, FORCING THEM TO MAKE OWN ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALTERNATE ACCOMMODATIONS.

3. ALL INSISTED THAT TOUR HAD BEEN PAID IN FULL IN ADVANCE.. ACCORDINGLY, PERSON TO CONTACT IS WILLIAM HUTTON, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS, 1511 K STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005.

4. WE NOTE FROM OUR EXPERIENCE THAT AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS IS WELL ORGANIZED ON COSTA DEL SOL, HAS FULL TIME BRITISH CITIZEN AGENT WHO HANDLES THEIR TOURS AND TAKES CARE OF TYPES OF SERVICES AND NEEDS THAT THESE AMERICANS HAD EXPECTED FROM COUNCIL.
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((FYI, SAME AARP AGENT WAS ONE WHO DECIDED AARP WOULD PICK UP BILL FOR RETURNING REMAINS OF WILLIAM LIMING, AMERICAN CITIZEN MURDERED ON BEACH IN TORREMOLINOS IN JANUARY. SEE SEVILLE 0001).

5. DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION INVITED TO FOREGOING SITUATION BECAUSE OF INHERENT WELFARE PROTECTION RAMIFICATIONS. WE ARE INCREASINGLY BECOMING INVOLVED WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT IN PICKING UP PIECES FOR SENIOR AMERICANS WHO FOR WHATEVER REASONS ARE NOT BEING ACCOMMODATED AS THEY HAD EXPECTED OR PERHAPS BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THEY WOULD BE, AND TURN TO US FOR ASSISTANCE. WERE IT NOT FOR INTEREST AND ASSISTANCE OF AMERICAN CLUB, WHICH MY PREDECESSOR CONSUL GENERAL CUTTER HELPED ORGANIZE SOME YEARS AGO, WE WOULD BE MUCH MORE DEEPLY ENGAGED THAN WE ARE.

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6. AARP REP INFORMS ME THAT ON ANY ONE DAY HE HAS AS MANY AS SEVERAL THOUSAND SENIOR AMERICANS BOOKED INTO TORREMOLINOS AREA. INCREASE CRIME RATE THERE HAS BEEN SERIOUS PROBLEM AND A NUMBER OF ELDERLY AMERICANS HAVE BEEN MUGGED AND HAD PURSES SNATCHED OVER PAST WEEKS. I CALLED ON MAYORS OF MALAGA AND TORREMOLINOS AND CIVIL GOVERNOR OF MALAGA PROVINCE THIS WEEK TO EXPRESS CONCERN. ALL THREE ASSURED ME THAT POLICE ARE ATTEMPTING TO CLEAN AREA UP, THAT POLICE PATROLS HAD BEEN INCREASED AND THAT OVER 140 ARRESTS HAD BEEN MADE IN PREVIOUS FIVE DAYS. I BELIEVE THEY ALL UNDERSTOOD POTENTIAL REPERCUSSIONS FOR TOURIST INDUSTRY IF SOME IMPROVEMENT WERE NOT NOTED.

7. ALL THIS IS TO SAY THAT ELDERLY AMERICANS WHO TRAVEL IN SUCH ORGANIZED TOURS DO SO BECAUSE THERE IS SAFETY IN NUMBERS AND BECAUSE THEY EXPECT A MINIMUM NUMBER OF SERVICES AVAILABLE WHICH ARE ATTENDENT TO PECULIAR NEEDS OF ELDERLY. TO BE LEFT ON THEIR OWN ENGENDERS INNUMERABLE HAZARDS. THUS IF ORGANIZING AGENCIES DO NOT LIVE UP TO THEIR COMMITMENTS, OR IF BY SOME GAP IN COMMUNICATION THESE TRAVELERS HAVE DELUDED THEMSELVES AS TO WHAT THEY MIGHT EXPECT, THEN OUR WELFARE AND PROTECTION SERVICES WILL BE INEVITABLY AND INCREASINGLY ENGAGED TO FILL IN THE GAP. OUR HOPE IS THAT NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS CAN BE EFFECTIVELY APPRISED OF PROBLEM. POST STANDS READY TO SUPPLY FURTHER INFORMATION AS NEEDED AND WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S
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GUIDANCE IN THIS RESPECT.FOUCHE

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